National Repentance, *the only way to prevent the ruin of a* Sinful People.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

KINGSTON on *Thames*,

NOVEMBER the 25th, 1741,

The DAY appointed by

PROCLAMATION

For a general

FAST and HUMILIATION

Before ALMIGHTY GOD, &c.

By *GEORGE WIGHTWICKE*, M. A.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Hearers.

If my people, which are called by my name, ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their ſin, and will heal their land. 2 Chron. vii. 14.

LONDON,

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THIS is the day appointed, by *proclamation*, for a general faſt and humiliation before Almighty GOD, to be obſerved in a devout and religious manner, by ſending up our united, fervent ſupplications to the *Divine Majeſty*, for obtaining the pardon of our ſins, and averting thoſe heavy judgments, which our manifold and heinous provocations have moſt juſtly deſerved; and imploring his bleſſing and aſſiſtance on his Majeſty's arms, both by ſea and land; and reſtoring peace, ſafety, and tranquility to himſelf, and to his kingdoms. That I may adapt my diſcourſe to the preſent *ſolemn occaſion*, I have made choice of that excellent portion of holy writ, in

JONAH, chap. iii.

4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 verſes.

So the people of Nineveh believed GOD, *and proclaimed a faſt, and put on ſackcloth, from the greateſt of them, even to the leaſt of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he aroſe from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with ſackcloth, and ſat in aſhes. And he cauſed it to be proclaimed, and publiſhed through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles) ſaying, Let neither man nor beaſt, herd nor flock taſte any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beaſt be covered with ſackcloth, and cry mightily unto* GOD: *yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if* GOD *will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not? And* GOD *ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and* GOD *repented of the evil, that he had ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

PREVAILING wickedneſs being the uſual forerunner of *national judgments*, the only way to avert them, is to humble ourſelves before GOD, for our *perſonal* and *national* ſins, and to turn from them; and, by ſolemn *faſting* and *prayer*, to implore the continuance of his forfeited protection.

AND

AND if we retain humbling impreſſions of our *perſonal ſins*, whereby we have contributed to the *national guilt*, and provoked a righteous GOD to let in his judgments upon us; and to our united, fervent prayers and ſupplications, add *unfeigned repentance*, and a *thorough reformation* of our evil ways; we may warrantably hope for a gracious return in anſwer to our prayers; and that GOD will not only avert *deſerved puniſhments*, but vouchſafe the continuance of his *undeſerved mercies*.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we have an account of *Jonah's ſecond divine commiſſion* to preach repentance to the *Ninevites*. *Jonah* was a prophet of the *ten tribes*, about the days of *Jeroboam* the ſecond, 2 *Kings* xiv. 25. but they continuing obſtinate and impenitent, he was ſent by GOD to the *Ninevites*, thereby to ſhame the *Iſraelites* for their obſtinacy and incorrigibleneſs.

JONAH, purſuant to his inſtructions, went immediately to *Nineveh*, and preached the abſolute neceſſity of *repentance* and *reformation*, in order to avert the righteous judgments of GOD, from that wicked city. Ver. 4. *And Jonah began to enter into the city a days journey; and he cried and ſaid, yet forty days, and Nineveh ſhall be overthrown.* The ſubſtance of what he delivered to the inhabitants of it was, that without unfeigned repentance, the judgments of GOD would aſſuredly overtake them.

UPON this the people, as bad as they were, did not *diſbelieve* the prophet's denunciation of GOD's

GOD's judgments againſt them; but immediately proclaimed a *ſolemn faſt*, and all *ranks* and *degrees* among them humbled themſelves before GOD, and cried mightily for mercy, and repented and *turned from their evil way:* and GOD was intreated of them, and averted thoſe terrible judgments which he threatned he would otherwiſe inflict upon them; as we read in the words of my text; *So the people of Nineveh believed GOD, and proclaimed a faſt, and put on ſackcloth, from the greateſt of them to the leaſt of them*, according to the uſual cuſtom of thoſe times on their ſolemn days of faſting and prayer. *For the word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he aroſe from his throne, and he laid his robe from him*, the enſign of majeſty, *and covered himſelf with ſackcloth, and ſat in aſhes. And he cauſed it to be proclaimed and publiſhed through Nineveh (by the decree of the king) and his nobles, ſaying, let neither man nor beaſt, herd nor flock, taſte any thing, let them not feed nor drink water; but let man and beaſt—cry mightily to GOD:* i. e. let men humble themſelves, and offer up their united fervent prayers and ſupplications for the continuance of his mercy, and for averting his threatned judgments. *Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell, if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we periſh not? And GOD ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and GOD repented of the evil*

evil that he had ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not.

IN which words we have two things obſervable.

1. THE *method*, the *Ninevites* took, to avert the terrible deſtruction, God by the prophet had denounced againſt them. And,

2. THE *happy ſucceſs* of it.

1. WE may obſerve the *method* the wicked inhabitants of *Nineveh* took, to avert the terrible deſtruction God, by the *Prophet*, had denounced againſt them. *They proclaimed a faſt*, humbled themſelves for their ſins, *cried mightily unto God* for mercy, *and turned every one from his evil way.*

JONAH had no ſooner warned them from GOD of their approaching ruin, unleſs they unfeignedly repented of their ſins, but they believed, and were fully perſwaded of the truth of what he delivered to them from God; and immediately *proclaimed a faſt*, and deeply humbled themſelves before God, for the crying ſins of all ranks and degrees amongſt them, from the *King* upon the throne, to the meaneſt of his *ſubjects*: being deeply affected with the impending judgment a righteous God had denounced againſt them, if they obſtinately perſiſted in their daring impiety and rebellion againſt him; they bethought themſelves, and humbled themſelves for their *perſonal ſins*, and the *crying abominations* that were found in the midſt of them; and, with ſolemn *faſting* and *prayer*,

prayer, cried mightily unto God to avert his judgments, and earneſtly implored his mercy, and ſhewed the *ſincerity* of their humiliation, faſting and prayer, by *turning every one from his evil way*, i. e. by a thorough reformation.

2. We may obſerve the *happy ſucceſs* of it. *And GOD ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and GOD repented of the evil that he had ſaid that he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

God ſaw that the terrible *denunciation* of approaching judgment, had produced its *deſired effect*; that they were *ſincere* in their ſolemn faſting and prayer; and that the awful meſſage he had ſent them by the prophet, had awakened them to repentance; and therefore he (who *does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*) determined not to inflict the judgment, he had denounced againſt them, if they *obſtinately perſiſted* in their ſins.

I believe I need not tell you, that when it is here ſaid *that GOD repented of the evil that he had ſaid he would do unto them*, that there can be no ſuch thing, ſtrictly ſpeaking, as *repentance* in God; but the form of the expreſſion is only in condeſcenſion to our *weakneſs*, and by way of *accommodation* to our faculties. God, in ſcripture-phraſe, is ſaid to *repent*, when he alters the courſe of his providence, and the method of his proceedings with us; which he may do very conſiſtently with the perfections of his nature, particularly,

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with his unerring *wiſdom*, and unchangeable *truth* and *veracity*, notwithſtanding the moſt awful threatning of impending judgments, becauſe this *tacit condition* is included in it, *if thoſe againſt whom he has denounced his judgments, are not hereby reclaimed from their ſins*; it being one of the *ſtanding maxims* of his government, that *national repentance*, ſhall prevent *national judgment*, Jer xviii 7, 8. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak, concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: if that nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, then I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them*; which plainly ſhows, that when GOD threatens to bring deſolating judgments upon a ſinful people, his threatnings are not *abſolute* but *conditional*; and that this *tacit condition*, is included in the denunciation of publick judgments; *if that people againſt whom they are denounced, are not hereby awakened to repentance and reformation.* If the awful threatning has *this happy effect*, to reclaim them from their ſins, then the *execution* of it is wholly *ſuſpended*; but if it does not produce *reformation*, then it will certainly take place, and a righteous GOD will let in his judgments upon them.

THE *doctrinal propoſition* contained in theſe words, and that I ſhall inſiſt on, is this.

THAT when a ſinful people are threatned with deſolating judgments; as'tis then eſpecially their duty to be deeply humbled before GOD for their crying ſins, to deprecate his wrath, and ſupplicate for mercy, and to turn every one from his

evil way; ſo this is the only effectual method to prevent their ruin, and to ſecure his forfeited gracious protection.

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I ſhall obſerve the following method.

I. *I ſhall prove, that when a ſinful people are threatned with deſolating judgments and calamities, 'tis then eſpecially their duty to be deeply humbled before* GOD, *for their manifold ſins and provocations; to deprecate his wrath, and to cry mightily for mercy; to turn every one from his evil way, and immediately to ſet about a thorough reformation.*

II. *I ſhall point out to you, ſome of thoſe crying ſins, which we in theſe ſinful nations, ſhould particularly confeſs and bewail before* GOD, *and be deeply humbled for, and which, at this day, loudly call for national repentance, and reformation.*

III. *I ſhall ſhew you, what incouragement we have, notwithſtanding the multitude, and the aggravations of our ſins, to hope, that upon our national repentance and reformation, and united fervent prayers and ſupplications, a gracious* GOD *will avert deſerved judgments, and vouchſafe the continuance of his forfeited favour and protection.*

And *Laſtly, cloſe all with an application ſuitable to this day's ſolemnity.*

I. *I ſhall prove, that when a ſinful people are threatned with deſolating judgments and calamities,*

ties, 'tis then eſpecially their duty to be deeply humbled before GOD, *for their manifold ſins and provocations; to deprecate his wrath, and to cry mightily for mercy; to turn every one from his evil way; and immediately to ſet about a thorough reformation.*

Now this will appear highly *reaſonable* and abſolutely *neceſſary*, if we conſider the following particulars.

1. *THAT the crying ſins of a people draw down the wrath and vengeance of* GOD *upon them.*

NATIONAL wickedneſs, is the procuring cauſe of *national judgments*; and therefore, when ever theſe are either felt or feared, 'tis our *duty*, our *wiſdom*, our *intereſt*, to lie low before GOD, under a ſenſe of our ſins, and to ſhew the *ſincerity* of our *repentance*, and humble ſupplications for mercy, by a ſpeedy and thorough *reformation.*

GOD never contends with any nation or people, but when the *cry of their wickedneſs is come up before him.* Prevailing wickedneſs has been the *procuring cauſe* of all the deſolating judgments that ever have been in the world; and to this, GOD, by his *inſpired prophets*, aſcribes all the miſeries and calamities that befel his ancient people: [a] *How long ſhall the land mourn for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein?* — [b] *Jeruſalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen, becauſe their tongues and their doings are againſt the*

[a] Jer. xii. 4. [b] Iſa. iii. 8, 9.

Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The ſhew of their countenance doth witneſs againſt them, and they declare their ſin as Sodom, they hide it not: wo unto their ſoul, for they have rewarded evil unto themſelves. — [c] *Thy way and thy doings have procured theſe things unto thee, this is thy wickedneſs, becauſe it is bitter, becauſe it reacheth unto thine heart.* — [d] *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee, and thy backſlidings ſhall reprove thee: know therefore and ſee, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy* GOD, *and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord* GOD *of hoſts.*

AND when GOD threatned by the prophets to chaſtiſe the daring inſolence and rebellion of his ancient people, the *ſins* which provoked him to denounce his judgments againſt them were *particularly mentioned*; their *idolatry*, *profaneneſs*, *formality*, *debauchery*, their *pride* and *luxury*, their *injuſtice*, *oppreſſion*, and *cruelty*, &c. [e] *How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment, righteouſneſs lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy ſilver is become droſs, thy wine mixed with water:* i. e. thy former goodneſs and real worth, has nothing in it now but an *empty ſhew* and *appearance* of piety. *Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherleſs, neither doth the cauſe of the widow come unto them. Therefore, ſaith the Lord, the Lord of hoſts, the mighty one of Iſrael,*

[c] Jer. iv. 18. [d] Jer. ii. 19. [e] Iſa. i, 21.—following ver.

Iſrael, Ah, I will eaſe me of mine adverſaries, and avenge me of mine enemies. [f] *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Iſrael; for the Lord hath a controverſy with the inhabitants of the land,* it follows, *becauſe there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of* GOD *in the land. By ſwearing and lying, and killing, and ſtealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood, therefore the land mourns.*—[g] *The earth mourneth, and fadeth away, the world languiſheth, and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languiſh. The earth alſo is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; becauſe they have tranſgreſſed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlaſting covenant. Therefore hath the curſe devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are deſolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men left. The new wine mourneth, the vine languiſheth, all the merry-hearted do ſigh.*——*All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left deſolation, and the gate is ſmitten with deſtruction.*——[h] *Your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your* GOD, *and your ſins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity, your lips have ſpoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverſeneſs. None calleth for juſtice, nor any pleadeth for truth,*——*their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.*——*In tranſgreſſing and lying againſt*

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[f] Hoſ. iv. 1, 2, 3. [g] Iſ. xxiv. 4, 5, 6, 7; 11, 12.
[h] Iſ. lix. 2, 3, 4; 13, 14, 15.

the Lord, and departing away from our GOD, *ſpeaking oppreſſion and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falſhood. And judgment is turned away backward, and juſtice ſtandeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the ſtreet, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himſelf a prey; and the Lord ſaw it, and it diſpleaſed him that there was no judgment.*

And to add no more, *Jer.* v. 1, 2; 7; 9. where many of their *heinous ſins*, which cried aloud to God for vengeance, are particularly enumerated. *Run ye to and fro through the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, and ſee now and know, and ſeek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that ſeeketh the truth, and I will pardon it. And though they ſay the Lord liveth, ſurely they ſwear falſely.——How ſhall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forſaken me, and ſworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and aſſembled themſelves by troops in the harlots houſes.——Shall I not viſit for theſe things? ſaith the Lord: and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?*

To enumerate the ſeveral paſſages that might be produced to this purpoſe, would be to *tranſcribe* the prophets; but from the paſſages that have been already cited, 'tis abundanty evident, that *national ſins* are the *procuring cauſe* of *national judgments* *; as alſo what thoſe *ſins* are, which

* How proſperous and flouriſhing ſoever ſome nations may

which bring down the vengeance of Heaven on an impenitent and incorrigible people.

AND have we not, in *theſe ſinful nations*, great reaſon for deep repentance and humiliation at this day, when many of the *ſame ſins* with which the righteous Governour of the world was ſo highly incenſed againſt the ancient *Jews*, and which are the *uſual fore-runners* of the moſt terrible judgments, are found amongſt us?

2. *THAT we ſhould be deeply humbled for our ſins, and cry mightily to GOD for mercy, and turn every one from his evil way, will appear highly reaſonable, and abſolutely neceſſary, if we conſider that the merciful deſign of GOD in the judgments he inflicts, or threatens to inflict, on a ſinful people, is to lead them to repentance; and this he expects, and indiſpenſibly requires.*

GOD never ſends judgments on a wicked people, *merely* to afflict them, and diſplay his *abſolute dominion and ſovereignty*: no; to inflict judgments, whether of a more *publick* or *private* nature, merely for the *ſake of inflicting* them, would rob him of the glory of thoſe *amiable perfections* of his nature; I mean, his infinite *wiſdom* and *goodneſs*, which qualify him for the *government* of the world, and peculiarly recommend him to the veneration and eſteem of his rational creatures. An infinitely *wiſe* and *good* Being, who is *love* itſelf, *eſſential love and goodneſs*, ſufficient for his *own happineſs*, and the

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may ſeem, while vice and wickedneſs prevails among them; their outward proſperity is really their infelicity and miſery.

happineſs of all his creatures, muſt be infinitely removed from *caprice* and *humour*, and from all *hatred*, *malice*, and deſire of *revenge*; and therefore, whenever GOD contends with us by his judgments, he muſt have *wiſe* and *great ends* worthy of himſelf, to ſubſerve by them; whether they more immediately relate to *private perſons* or a *community*. *If they be bound in fetters, and held in cords of affliction, then GOD ſheweth them their work, and their tranſgreſſions that they have exceeded. He openeth alſo their ear to diſcipline, and commandeth, that they turn from their iniquities*; as *Elihu* elegantly expreſſes it, *Job* xxxii. 8, 9, 10. The *end* he aims at, is to take them off from their ſins, and to bring them to himſelf. And, agreeable to this, is what we have in *Iſa.* ix. 13. *The Syrians before, and the Egyptians behind, ſhall deſtroy Iſrael; for all this his anger is not turned away; but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill: for the people turneth not to him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of hoſts.*

THE *deſign* of a gracious GOD, in all the afflictions and calamities that befel the people of *Iſrael*, during their wandering in the wilderneſs for the ſpace of forty years, was to *reclaim* and *reform* them, as *Moſes* obſerves, *Deut.* viii. 15, 16. *Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderneſs, wherein were fiery ſerpents, and ſcorpions, and drought, where there was no water:* It follows, *that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.*

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AND, that the *deſign* of a gracious GOD, in the judgments he brings upon a ſinful people, is to *reform* them, is plainly enough intimated in his frequent *expoſtulations* with his ancient people, for their *impenitence* and *incorrigibleneſs*, under the ſevere rebukes of his providence. Thus, *Iſa.* i. 4, 5. *Ah ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have forſaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of Iſrael unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why ſhould ye be ſtricken any more? ye will revolt yet more and more: the whole head is ſick, and the whole heart is faint.* Calamities are grievous and general: *From the ſole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no ſoundneſs in it; but wounds and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores: they have not been cloſed, neither bound up, nor mollified with ointment.* As if GOD had ſaid, "I have ſuffered "you to continue in this *deplorable condition* "for a while, to try whether theſe afflictions "will *awaken* and *humble* you for your ſins, "and bring you to *repentance*; but all in vain."

AND thus GOD expoſtulates with *Ephraim* for his refractory and incorrigible diſpoſition, *Hoſ.* vii. 9, 10. *Strangers have devoured his ſtrength, and he knoweth it not: yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him*; i. e. the fatal ſymptoms of his approaching ruin, *yet he knoweth not*; does not duly conſider it. *And the pride of Iſrael teſtifieth to his face, and they do not return to the Lord their GOD, nor ſeek him for all this.*

AND thus again, GOD enumerates by the prophet *Amos*, *chap.* iv. the grievous judgments, he had inflicted upon them one after another, to *ſoften* their hard hearts, and *humble* them for their ſins; and upbraids them for their *impenitence* and *incorrigibleneſs* under them: Read the prophet's eloquent complaint of the whole people of *Iſrael*, ver. 9, 10, 11. *I have ſmitten you with blaſting and mildew, when your gardens and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive-trees increaſed, the palmer-worm devoured them; yet have ye not returned unto me ſaith the Lord. I have ſent among you the peſtilence, after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I ſlain with the ſword, and have taken away your horſes, and I have made the ſtink of your camps to come up unto your noſtrils; yet have ye not returned unto me, ſaith the Lord. I have overthrown ſome of you, as GOD overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand pluckt out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, ſaith the Lord.*

AND, to add no more, *Iſa.* xlii. 22, 23, 24, 25. *This is a people robbed and ſpoiled, they are all of them ſnared in holes, and they are hid in priſon-houſes: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a ſpoil, and none ſaith reſtore. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a ſpoil, and Iſrael to the robbers? did not the Lord, he againſt whom we have ſinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him*

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the fury of his anger, and the ſtrength of battle: and it hath ſet him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart; i. e. they did not *regard the work of the Lord, nor conſider the operation of his hand*, ſo as to repent of their ſins, and turn from their evil ways; but were *regardleſs* of his judgments, and *obſtinately* perſiſted in their ſinful practices.

FROM all which paſſages, and many others, that might be produced to this purpoſe, it is ſufficiently evident, that the *end* and *deſign* of GOD, in bringing deſolating judgments upon a ſinful people, is to *reclaim* and *reform* them.

AND ſhould not this conſideration awaken us to repentance? when we know that the *ſoreſt* of his judgments are deſigned to *reform* us; and that 'tis with *reluctance*, that he at any time proceeds to extremity with a ſinful people? and that he is repreſented waiting, as it were, with *longing expectation*, for their penitent return to him? [i] *Wo unto thee, O Jeruſalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be?*

3. AND laſtly. The *abſolute neceſſity of repentance and reformation, will ſtill more evidently appear, if we conſider, that there is no other poſſible way to prevent the ruin of a ſinful people.*

THIS is *the method* GOD of his infinite *wiſdom* and *goodneſs* has preſcribed, for averting his judgments, and deriving his bleſſing upon a people; and without *this*, the vengeance of Heaven which purſues, will aſſuredly overtake them.

[i] Jer. xiii. 27.

'Tis in vain for us to hope to eſcape his righteous judgments, while we *obſtinately* perſiſt in our ſins, and are *incorrigible* under the *means* a gracious GOD makes uſe of to reclaim us: Nothing but *repentance* and *reformation* will avert his judgments from us, and prevent our deſtruction. [k] *Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.* [l] *O Jeruſalem, waſh thine heart from wickedneſs, that thou mayeſt be ſaved, how long ſhall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* i. e. "Why will you be ſo fooliſh, as "to flatter yourſelves with ſecret hopes of impunity, while you obſtinately perſiſt in your "impiety and rebellion againſt me; there is no "other *poſſible way* to eſcape the miſeries and "calamities that are coming upon you, than by "breaking off your ſins by repentance, and re"turning to your duty." *Incorrigibleneſs* will bring down ſtill *heavier* judgments upon a people. If *one* judgment does not reform them, he will ſend *another* much *more ſevere.* When GOD threatned his ancient people with a *ſeries* of grievous judgments, he tells them, that if they would [m] *not be reformed by theſe things, he would puniſh them yet ſeven-fold more for their ſins.* And when they were *regardleſs* of the terrible judgments, that had been inflicted upon them, one after another, and theſe had proved *ineffectual* for reclaiming them from their evil way; GOD told them, that he would ſtill go on to puniſh them, and bid them expect it, and prepare

[k] Jer. vi. 8. [l] Jer. iv. 14. [m] Levit. xxvi. 23, 24.

pare for it. [n] *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Iſrael; and becauſe I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy* GOD, *O Iſrael.*

WITHOUT *unfeigned repentance*, and a *thorough reformation*, nothing can prevent the ruin of a ſinful people; without *this*, even our ſolemn days of faſting and prayer, will be ſo far from being *pleaſing* and *acceptable* to GOD, and *available* for this purpoſe, that they will be highly *diſpleaſing* and *offenſive* to his Sacred Majeſty; *vid. Iſa.* lviii. 5, *and following verſes.* 'Tis not our *outward humiliation*, our *ſolemn faſting and prayer* that GOD regards, and that will avail for turning his anger from us, and deriving his bleſſing upon us; unleſs they are accompanied *with fruits meet for repentance, meet for our Maſter's uſe.*

AND thus I have gone through the *1ſt* thing propoſed in the method; and have proved, *that when a ſinful people are threatned with deſolating judgments, 'tis then eſpecially their duty, to be deeply humbled before* GOD, *for their manifold ſins; to deprecate his wrath; to cry mightily for mercy; to turn every one from his evil way, and to ſet about a thorough reformation.* Now this appears *highly reaſonable*, and *abſolutely neceſſary*, if we conſider,

THAT the crying ſins of a people draw down the wrath and vengeance of GOD *upon them.*

THAT

[n] Amos iv. 12.

THAT the merciful deſign of GOD, *in the judgments he inflicts on a ſinful people, is to lead them to repentance.*

AND, laſtly. *That there is no other poſſible way to prevent their ruin.*

I COME now to the II[d] thing propoſed in the method; namely, *to point out to you, ſome of thoſe crying ſins, which we in theſe ſinful nations, ſhould confeſs and bewail before* GOD, *and be deeply humbled for; and which, at this day, loudly call for national repentance and reformation.*

OUR ſins are *many* and *great*, attended with *heinous* and *aggravating* circumſtances; we are *a ſinful people, a people laden with iniquity*. There is, perhaps, no nation under Heaven, that has had greater advantages for improvement in the practice of *real vital religion*; and yet, alas! 'tis too evident to be deny'd, that the bulk of its inhabitants, are ſunk into the dregs of *vice* and *wickedneſs* at this day, and ſeem, I had almoſt ſaid, to have loſt all ſenſe of GOD and religion.

HAVE not multitudes of late, openly eſpouſed the cauſe of *infidelity*, and uſed all their *artifice* and *wit* to ſupport it; and made the moſt vigorous efforts to run down *real chriſtianity*? Have they not loaded it with the odious and opprobrious names of *bigotry*, *enthuſiaſm*, and *prieſtcraft*; and poured the utmoſt *contempt* and *ridicule* on the profeſſors of it, as mere *viſionaries* and *brain-ſick enthuſiaſts*; and *this* under the ſpecious

ſpecious and plauſible pretence of exalting *reaſon*, and *natural religion*; and expreſſing a more than *ordinary zeal* againſt *ſuperſtition* and *bigotry*, and a generous concern for the *liberties* of mankind? though the *religion of Chriſt* is really the greateſt *perfection* and *improvement of reaſon*, and the grand deſign of it is to promote the practice of *natural religion* in all its branches, and to inforce obedience to the *eternal and immutable law of nature*, by the moſt *awful ſanctions*; and to baniſh, not only all *prieſtcraft*, but all *laycraft* and *wickedneſs*, as much as may be, out of the world; and is admirably calculated to promote this *great* and *excellent end*; and is a religion the moſt *peaceable* and *friendly* to the *liberties* of mankind. Were they *real friends* to *natural religion*, as they *pretend*, would they be ſuch *avowed enemies* to *revealed*, and ſo violently oppoſe it, which differs from it only in ſome few *doctrines*, and *poſitive inſtitutions*, which are perfectly agreeable to the *principles of eternal reaſon*, and have a *direct tendency* to ſtrengthen the *obligations* of *the law* of *nature*, and inforce obedience to it; and to advance mankind, to greater degrees of virtue and holineſs, by way of preparation for greater degrees of happineſs and glory in the life to come?

Does not *open profaneneſs and impiety* almoſt every where *prevail*, and ſeem to be on the *growing hand?* O what horrid *oaths* and *imprecations* do we daily hear in our ſtreets? how ſhamefully is the *ſacred* and *venerable name* of the *great* GOD, profaned by perſons of all *ranks* and *degrees*

grees in common converſation? and what *wilful* and *corrupt perjuries* are daily practiſed in all our *courts of judicature*, on purpoſe to *pervert* juſtice, and ſtop the courſe of it in its *proper channels*, and ſcreen the guilty, to the diſhonour of GOD, and, the infinite ſcandal of our holy religion? And would to GOD, that what *Tully* the *Roman orator*, once ſaid of the *Greeks*, was not too applicable to us in theſe *ſinful nations*; *quibus jusjurandum jocus, teſtimonium ludus*; they made it a matter of jeſt and drollery to *forſwear* themſelves, and give falſe teſtimonies.

How wretchedly is the *Lord's-day profaned*, and turned into a day of *paſtime* and *recreation*? and how many reſort to places of *pleaſure* and *entertainment*, and ſpend that day in *mirth* and *jollity*, and the *lawleſs gratification of their appetites* and luſts, which GOD has *appropriated* to himſelf and his ſervice; and which, therefore, ſhould be ſpent in the *publick* and *private duties and exerciſes* of his worſhip? What contempt is poured upon the *publick worſhip and ordinances of GOD?* and, alas! how generally is ſerious religion, and practical godlineſs, turned into *jeſt* and *ridicule*, in this looſe and degenerate age? as if we had nothing to do with religion; as if this was fit only for *mean ſpirits*, and for perſons of *weak and diſtemper'd brains*, though it is really the *perfection*, the *glory*, and *felicity* of human nature, our *firſt* and *great concern*; and the time is coming, when the moſt *daring* and *profligate ſinners*, who are now moſt forward in ridiculing and bantering it, will think *ſo?*

How

How ſhamefully is one of the moſt *ſacred rites* of our holy religion *proſtituted* to ſerve the purpoſes of *pride, ambition, covetouſneſs, ill-will*, and *uncharitableneſs*; and turned into a *tool* and *engine of ſtate*? a profanation of the ſacrament, by which GOD is ſo publickly *diſhonoured*; and the *end* of this *ſacred inſtitution perverted* and abuſed, is no queſtion, one of the *crying ſins* of theſe nations; which, at this day, call for deep repentance and humiliation; and for which I am afraid GOD has a controverſy with us.

How much does *lewdneſs and debauchery* every where prevail? and how *open* and *bare-fac'd* is it grown of late, in defiance of all laws both *divine* and *human*? Are not our *whoredoms* and *adulteries* too much kept in countenance, not only by the *number*, but *greatneſs* of the offenders?

Is not our *pride and luxury* grown to a *prodigious height* of late? and what multitudes of the *populace* intoxicate themſelves with *ſpirituous liquors*, and daily reel with impunity in our ſtreets; and never account themſelves happy, but when they have made themſelves drunk, and fit to perpetrate the moſt execrable outrages and villanies.

What aſtoniſhing *ingratitude*, are we in theſe nations guilty of, for whom GOD has ſo often and ſo ſignally appeared? perhaps no nation under heaven, has had more *frequent*, or *ſeaſonable inſtances* of his providential care; and yet, alas, how *unthankful* have we been for them, and how *unfruitful* under them? and what multi-

tudes are ſo baſe, as to *traduce* the *glorious inſtruments* of the wonderful deliverance GOD has wrought for us; and to load them with infamy and reproach, and ſeem weary of the *proteſtant religion*, and of liberty itſelf.

WHAT a ſhameful *diſregard and contempt* is there of *lawful ſuperiours?* and how *turbulent and factious* are we grown? how many fly in the face of the *government*, and take upon them to cenſure and condemn all the meaſures that are taken; and endeavour, by *calumnies* and *invectives*, to raiſe a ferment in the nation, at this *critical conjuncture*, when *love* to their *country* would teach them a more prudent and *peaceable* behaviour? what *baſe arts* have been made uſe of, by *ſome*, to throw us into confuſion, and to kindle a *civil war*, in the bowels of theſe kingdoms, now we are ingaged in a *foreign war?* and how many, under the ſpecious pretence of *patriotiſm*, have joined iſſue with the avowed enemies of their country, on purpoſe to diſtreſs the *government*, and clog the wheels of it; and ſeem reſolved to run the moſt deſperate hazard of loſing *all*, rather than not gratify their *ſpleen* and *reſentment*, their *pride*, *ambition*, *avarice*, and *inſatiable luſt of power!*

SURELY, if ever, *this is a time in which iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold.* The *profeſſors* of chriſtianity ſeem to have loſt, in a great meaſure, the *ſpirit of religion*, and the *power of godlineſs*, as well as the *form* of it. Is not the religion of ſuch too much dwindled into *lukewarmneſs*, and a *ſhameful indifference* in the

the matters of their GOD? or degenerated into a *fierce* and *uncharitable* contention for the *Shiboleth* of a party, and the *modes* and *forms* of religion? And, alas! have not our *ſenſeleſs diviſions* and *animoſities* about theſe, cut out the *vitals* of it?

How ſhamefully do even *profeſſors* themſelves *profane the Lord's-day*, by *ſtaying at home*, and *needleſsly* abſenting themſelves from the *publick worſhip* of GOD, when there is nothing to hinder their attendance upon it but the *badneſs* of their *hearts*, their *ſpiritual ſloth*, or *ſpiritual pride*, and their *coldneſs* and *indifference* in the buſineſs of religion, and the everlaſting concernments of their ſouls? Such, by their *wilful* and *ſcandalous omiſſions* of this nature, loudly proclaim, that they are but little concerned for the honour of GOD, and the Redeemer's kingdom and intereſt among men, for their *own ſouls*, or the ſouls of *others*, who may be incouraged and hardened in the neglect of this branch of their duty, by their bad examples in this reſpect.

AND how ſhamefully do the generality of *profeſſors* in our day, turn their backs upon the *Lord's Table?* and how few are there, that make conſcience of their duty in this reſpect? The generality live in *direct contradiction* to that *expreſs command*, and *dying charge* of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, *do this in remembrance of me*; and either *wilfully*, or through groundleſs *fear* and *ſcruples*, live in the *total neglect* of this branch of their duty.

And even of thoſe that partake of this *ordinance*, how *few* are there that are *ſtated communicants*, and make conſcience of a diligent attendance on this excellent and comfortable ordinance; or of living agreeably to their *chriſtian profeſſion* and obligations, and the ſolemn *engagements* they have laid themſelves under to be the Lord's, and to live lives of unreſerved obedience and devotedneſs to him?

These are *ſome* of thoſe *many heinous* and *GOD-provoking* ſins, which cry aloud for vengeance on our guilty heads; and which we, in theſe nations, ſhould be deeply humbled for; and which, at this day, loudly call for *national repentance* and reformation. I have fairly repreſented to you plain *matters of fact*, without *exaggeration*; and *will not GOD* (unleſs unfeigned repentance ſpeedily prevent) *viſit for theſe things? will not his ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?*

Give me leave to add, under this head, that while we are deploring the *ſins* of the *nation*, we ſhould be deeply humbled for our *perſonal ſins* and failings. *National repentance* muſt begin with *perſonal*; and, therefore, we ſhould, every one of us, be humbled for the [o] *plague of our own hearts*. And this God expects, and indiſpenſibly requires of us; [p] *I hearkened and heard, but they ſpake not aright, no man repented of his wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I done?*— We ſhould be humbled for all the ſins and miſcarriages, we are conſcious to ourſelves, we are

[o] 1 Kings xxxvii. 38, *&c.* [p] Jer. viii. 6.

are chargeable with, *and turn every one from his evil way.* And have we not great reaſon to be humbled, for the vanity and levity of our *thoughts*, for the carnality of our *affections*, for the pride and haughtineſs of our *ſpirits*, for the hardneſs of our hearts, for the *ſtrength* of our *corruptions*, and the *weakneſs* of our *graces*; for our *worldlineſs*, *ſenſuality*, *ſelfiſhneſs*, and the want of a *publick ſpirit*; for our *lukewarmneſs* and *formality* in religion; for our want of *love* to GOD, and *Chriſt*, and each *other*, and *zeal* for the advancement of his kingdom and intereſt in the world; for our *unfruitfulneſs*, under the *means of grace* we have ſo long enjoyed; and our ſhameful abuſe *of the patience, long-ſuffering, and forbearance of* GOD *towards us, which ſhould have led us to repentance*; and for the many *preſumptuous* violations of his holy and righteous laws; and, in a word, for all the ſins and follies of our hearts and lives?

OUR *perſonal*, as well as *national ſins*, call for deep repentance, and a ſpeedy and thorough reformation.

I COME now to the

III[d] thing propoſed in the method, *namely*, to ſhew you, *what incouragement we have, notwithſtanding the multitude, and aggravations of our ſins, to hope, that upon our repentance and reformation, and united fervent prayers and ſupplications for mercy, a gracious* GOD *will avert deſerved judgments, and vouchſafe the continuance of his forfeited favour and protection.*

THIS

THIS is the *method* GOD, in his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs has *preſcribed*; and therefore it muſt be *effectual* for averting his *judgments*, and deriving his *bleſſing* upon us. *National wickedneſs* being the procuring cauſe of *national judgments*, *national repentance* will be available for averting them, and ſecure to us the divine protection and bleſſing; for when GOD threatens to bring deſolating judgments on a ſinful people, this *tacit condition* is included in the threatning; *If they repent not of their ſins, and turn from their evil ways*; vid. that fore-mentioned place, *Jer.* xviii. 7, 8. But if the denunciation of judgments has this *happy effect* upon them, to make them leave their ſins, then the *execution* of the threatning is *ſuſpended*: and GOD will vouchſafe them the continuance of his *ſpecial protection*.

THIS method he has remarkably *owned* and *bleſſed*, and *crowned with ſucceſs*. Thus, when the prophet *Jonah*, was ſent to denounce the judgments of GOD againſt the *Ninevites*, upon their ſolemn faſting and prayer, and *turning every one from his evil way*, we read, *that GOD ſaw their works, and that they turned from their evil way: and that GOD repented of the evil that he had ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

AND when the prophet *Joel* was ſent to denounce a general judgment of *dearth and famine*, cauſed by an extreme drought, and an innumerable multitude of inſects; upon their *ſolemn faſting* and *prayer*, this grievous judgment was averted; *Joel* ii. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

There-

Therefore, alſo now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your GOD: *for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a bleſſing behind him.—Blow the trumpet in Zion, ſanctify a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly. Gather the people: ſanctify the congregation: aſſemble the elders: gather the children, and thoſe that ſuck the breaſts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her cloſet. Let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them ſay, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach; that the Heathen ſhould rule over them: wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people, where is their* GOD? *Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.* —— And, accordingly, we find this was the happy event.

THUS, when the children of *Iſrael* were juſt ready to be attacked by the numerous hoſt of the *Philiſtines*, and faſted, and prayed, and confeſſed their ſins in *Mizpeh*; to let mankind ſee what an incouraging aſpect this method of making application to GOD for mercy, has upon the welfare of a nation, we read, that from that *very day* of this ſolemn faſt, their affairs took a more favourable turn, and their enemies were entirely defeated [q].

AND

[q] 1 Sam. vii.

And to add no more; when *Aſa* gathered together all *Judah* and *Benjamin*, and offered up their fervent prayers and ſupplications to Almighty God for his gracious protection againſt the innumerable hoſt of *Ethiopians*, or *Arabians*; and he and his people ſolemnly [1] *entered into covenant to ſeek the Lord* GOD *of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their ſoul; and ſware with all their heart, and ſought him with their whole deſire*; we read, *that he was found of them; and that the Lord gave them reſt round about.*

This method has been *available* for *removing* public judgments and calamities, when they have been *actually inflicted*; and God has engaged his *unchangeable truth* and *faithfulneſs*, that thus it ſhall be in future ages. 2 *Chron.* vii. 14. *If my people who are called by my name, ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their ſin, and will heal their land.*

And the *conduct* of his *providence* has been always agreeable to this *gracious promiſe* of his *word*; as is ſufficiently evident from the paſſages that have been already mentioned: [2] *When his people in their trouble, did turn unto the Lord God of Iſrael, and ſought him, he was found of them.* This has been, and will be, the *ſtanding method* of his procedure with mankind in all ages: *If they repent, and turn every one from his evil way, and cry mightily to him* for mercy.

GOD

[1] 2 Chron. xv. 15. [2] Ch. xv. 4.

GOD will repent of the evil, which in the courſe of his providence, he would otherwiſe inevitably have brought upon them.

APPLICATION.

I SHALL make a few reflections on what has been ſaid. And,

1. *WE ſee what a diſmal aſpect prevailing wickedneſs has on the affairs of a people.*

IT is *this* that arms the juſtice of GOD againſt them, and draws down his wrath and vengeance upon them: 'Tis *this* that has made ſuch havock and confuſion in the world, and been the *procuring cauſe* of thoſe judgments and calamities that have ſpread miſery and devaſtation among mankind in all ages. 'Tis *this* that has ſunk whole nations, and overturned the moſt flouriſhing ſtates and kingdoms; as I could eaſily ſhew, both from *profane* and *ſacred* hiſtory.

RIGHTEOUSNESS indeed, as *Solomon* obſerves, *exalteth a nation*; this is the *baſis* of its happineſs, and the only *ſolid foundation* of its peace and proſperity; juſtice and piety, and the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs and goodneſs, raiſe a nation to the higheſt degree of proſperity and glory; [t] *But ſin is a reproach to any people.* It ſinks and depreſſes them: it brings the judgments of GOD upon them, 'till they become miſerable and contemptible in the eyes of all around them.

[t] Prov. xiv. 34.

NATIONAL virtue and religion has a *favourable aſpect* on the public affairs of a people; but *national vice and wickedneſs* is a *fatal ſymptom* of their approaching ruin.

2. *We may hence infer, what reaſon we, in theſe kingdoms, have for deep repentance, and to turn every one from his evil way.*

AND if the *crying ſins* of a people are juſt ground for this; if this is the *end* and *deſign* of the all-wiſe, merciful, and righteous governour of the world, when he is contending with us by his judgments, and there is no *other poſſible way* to avert them; then ſurely we, in theſe ſinful nations, have great reaſon to humble and abaſe ourſelves before him at this day, when the cry of our *manifold iniquity is come up before him*; when our *practical atheiſm and infidelity*, our *profaneneſs and impiety*, our *lewdneſs and debauchery*, our *pride and luxury*, our *profanation of GOD's holy day and name*, and our *contempt* of all laws, both *divine* and *human*, are grown ſo *open* and *barefaced*, and the *public worſhip* and *ordinances of GOD* are ſo *ſcandalouſly* neglected, even by multitudes of *profeſſors* themſelves. In a word, when *all* theſe ſins are found in the midſt of us, which have brought down the judgments of GOD upon a people in all ages, and cry aloud for vengeance on our guilty heads; ſurely, if ever we are humbled for our *national guilt*, it ſhould be *now*, when it is grown to ſuch a *prodigious height*, that we ſeem ripe for the ſoreſt judgments. *Now*, when the *ſword* is drawn, and we know not when it will be

ſheathed;

ſheathed; and a fire ſeems to be kindled in the bowels of all *Europe*; and we know not what will be the *final iſſue* of the war in which we are engaged, nor how far it may extend, nor *what powers* may engage in a confederacy againſt us.

THE ſeat of war is indeed, at *preſent*, at a *conſiderable diſtance* from us, and we only hear of garments rolled in blood, and of the deſolations that it has made where it comes; but who can tell how ſoon it may be brought *nearer* to us, or what calamities GOD has reſerved in ſtore for us in theſe ſinful lands, before it comes to an end.

LET us then be deeply humbled for the ſins of *all ranks* and *degrees*, and for our *perſonal ſins and failings, and turn every one from his evil way*; as ever we would warrantably hope for the *pardon* of our ſins, to have thoſe *impending judgments* which our manifold provocations have moſt juſtly deſerved, averted; and to have peace and tranquility reſtored to theſe kingdoms.

3. *FROM what has been ſaid, we ſee of what vaſt importance it is to us, that we all endeavour, in our reſpective ſtations and capacities, to promote a ſpeedy and thorough reformation, to the utmoſt of our power.*

To *this* we are loudly called by the Providence of GOD. His hand is now lifted up, *and ſhall we not hear the rod, and who has appointed it? Shall we not regard the work of the Lord, nor* conſider *the operation of his hand?* Does he

now ſeem to contend with us, and *ſhall we not wait for him in the way of his judgments?* Shall we not attend to the *language* of his *awful Providence*, and comport with it? Shall we not leave our ſins, *thoſe ſins* which are the ground of his controverſy with us, but ſtill go on to provoke him, till he abandon us, and give us up to the rage and inſults of our enemies; and till we have *learnt to fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord our GOD?*

AND ſince it is not in our power to *reform* the *nation*, any otherwiſe than by *reforming ourſelves* and our *families*, and ſetting a bright example of univerſal goodneſs in this looſe and degenerate age; ſhould not this be the pious reſolution (by the help of divine grace) of every one here preſent?

SHOULD we not be humbled *for the plague of our own hearts*, and mourn for whatever we find to be amiſs in *ourſelves*, and firmly reſolve (the grace of GOD aſſiſting us) to be more ſtrictly conſcientious in the whole of our behaviour? To be more diligent in our attendance on the *public* and *private duties* and *exerciſes* of *his worſhip*, if our conſciences tell us that we have been ſhamefully remiſs and negligent in *both?* and eſpecially at *this time*, when the intereſt of real religion ſeems to be at ſo very *low an ebb*; and the *good ſpirit of GOD* ſeems to be *departing* from our *worſhipping aſſemblies?*

SHOULD we not ſet up the worſhip of GOD in our *families*, and make conſcience of the regular diſcharge of this important, neceſſary and comfortable

comfortable duty, without which we can never warrantably hope that *relative duties* will be faithfully performed; to have much comfort in our *deareſt relations*, or to ſee religion thrive in thoſe, who are more immediately committed to our care; and *whoſe blood GOD will require at our hands*, if any of them ſhould *periſh* through our *neglect*, and we ſhould be any way *acceſſory* to their ruin; and for whoſe eternal welfare and happineſs we ſhould be *deeply* and *affectionately* concerned; eſpecially when we know, that the want of *family inſtruction and religion*, is one great reaſon of the *viſible* and *lamentable decay* of piety, and of the *growth* of *profaneneſs* and *immorality* at this day; the whole kingdom being made up of theſe *little communities?* And is not the diſobedience of *children* and *ſervants*, which is ſo *generally*, and ſo *loudly*, and ſo *juſtly* complained of, owing, in a great meaſure, to *parents* and *maſters* living in the ſhameful neglect of theſe great duties, both of *natural* and *revealed religion?*

LET us then endeavour to promote the *great* and *neceſſary* work of *reformation*, within the ſphere of our influence, to the utmoſt of our power; and, by our *pious examples*, to diffuſe a ſavour of religion on all around us, to excite a noble emulation in others, and to recommend ſerious religion, and primitive godlineſs, in the eye of the world, that others, by our ſhining examples, may be induced *to glorify our Father who is in heaven*; as we ſhall all of us certainly do, if we have a due regard for the honour

nour of GOD, for the intereſt of *religion*, for *ourſelves*, for our *families*, for our *country*.

AND give me leave to obſerve, that we are under *peculiar obligations* to a *truly religious behaviour* at *this time*; *for when the judgments of GOD are in the earth, the inhabitants thereof ſhould learn righteouſneſs*. When the ſword is already drawn againſt us, and we are engaged in a *war*, on the ſucceſs of which depends the *fate*, not only of *theſe kingdoms*, but, for ought we know, of the *proteſtant religion*, and the *liberties of Europe*.

GOD expreſly commanded his ancient people, [a] *When the hoſt goeth forth againſt thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing*; i. e. eſpecially at ſuch a time, when thou haſt the greateſt need of *divine help*; and haſt no reaſon to expect it, if thou indulgeſt thyſelf in wickedneſs, and *then* continueſt to provoke him. There is a ſentence very like this in *Agathias*, lib. ii. an ancient *Greek writer*, (mention'd by *Grotius*, towards the concluſion of his *Prolegomena* to the book *de jure belli & pacis*) "Injuſtice, ſays "he, and neglect of GOD's ſervice, are ever to "be avoided as moſt pernicious, but eſpecially "in a *time of war*, and when men are upon "the point of giving battle:" which he proves by the illuſtrious examples of *Darius*, *Xerxes*, and the *Athenians* in *Sicily*.

4. *FROM what has been ſaid, we ſee how little reaſon we have to diſtruſt the good Providence of GOD, (who has hitherto, bleſſed be his name, wonderfully*

[a] Deut. xxiii. 9

wonderfully appeared for us) if we are ſincere *in this ſolemn day of faſting, humiliation and prayer, and ſhew that we are ſo, by turning every one from his evil way; and how ſafely we may truſt and confide in him, for his future protection againſt all our enemies.*

How *many* and *great* ſoever our ſins have been, yet if we *return to the Lord*, from whom we have *revolted*, we have reaſon to hope that he will not *utterly forſake us*, but, according to his *wonted goodneſs*, mercifully interpoſe on our behalf, and give a *remarkable check* to the inſolent pride and malice of our enemies, and *confound their devices*; and, *in the greatneſs of his excellency, overthrow thoſe that riſe up againſt us; and ſend forth his word, and conſume them as ſtubble.* Exod. xv. 7.

LET us then make him our refuge and ſtrength, and we ſhall ſtill find him a very preſent help in time of trouble. He will go forth with our *hoſts*, and with our *fleets*, and crown our endeavours againſt the unjuſt attempts of our enemies with the deſired ſucceſs. Inſtead then of *truſting to an arm of fleſh*, and boaſting of the *greatneſs* of our *fleets*, and the *unparallel'd valour and bravery* of our *ſailors* and *ſoldiers*; let us truſt *in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.* He preſides in the important affairs of war, and often makes victory depend on ſuch *ſeeming little incidents* as lie out of the reach of *human wiſdom* to *foreſee*, or *human prudence* to *prevent*; and plainly ſhew, *that the race is not always to the ſwift, nor the battle to*

the

the ſtrong, that the battle is the Lord's; that to *him belong the ſhields of the earth*, and that there *is no wiſdom, nor counſel, nor underſtanding againſt the Lord*; and that victory and ſucceſs always inclines to *that ſide*, in *favour* of *which* the great governour of the world is pleaſed to interpoſe, according to what pious *Aſa* ſays, in his excellent prayer to GOD, *Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with few.* *David* was deeply ſenſible of this, and therefore acknowledged the interpoſition of divine Providence in the grand affairs of *war*; and under the influence of this perſwaſion and belief, ſaid, [x] *There is no king ſaved by the multitude of an hoſt. I will not truſt in my bow, neither ſhall my ſword ſave me.*

"THIS has been ſo evident to conſiderate "minds in all ages, that even the *Heathens* "themſelves, did always acknowledge a ſpe- "cial interpoſition of *Fortune*; by which the "more knowing and intelligent of them meant "*Providence*; and to this, they chiefly aſcribed "all their glorious atchievements."

PLUTARCH obſerves, "That there was "no temple at *Rome*, directed to *Wiſdom*, or "*Valour*, but a moſt *magnificent* and *ſtately* one "to *Fortune*; hereby plainly intimating, that "they did not aſcribe their victories and ſuc- "ceſs ſo much to their *conduct* and *bravery*, "as to the *Providence* of GOD." And thus again, ſpeaking of the *Romans*, he ſays "That "Time and *Fortune* laid the foundation of "their

[x] Pſal. xxxvii. 16.

their greatneſs;" where he aſcribes the wonderful ſeries of ſucceſs they had againſt their enemies, to *Divine Providence*, concurring with ſome *happy incidents* in their favour.

And *Livy*, their moſt *celebrated hiſtorian*, made this wiſe and juſt reflection, founded on *long experience* and obſervation, "That in all "*human affairs*, eſpecially in *matters of war*, *For-*"*tune* had a remarkable ſtroke: and where (ſays "that excellent writer) is the event leſs anſwera-"ble to expectation, than in war? And there is "nothing ſo *ſlight*, and *inconſiderable*, which "may not turn the ſcale in a great matter."

And to add no more, *Cæſar* himſelf, one of the moſt *famous* and *renowned heroes* of antiquity, made the ſame acknowledgement. "*As in* "*all other things* (ſays he) ſo particularly in *war*, *Fortune*," i. e. in other words, the *Providence of GOD*, "has a very great ſway.

Let us then ſhake off our dependance on creatures, and *truſt in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength; and ſince he has been a refuge and a ſhelter for us from our enemies, let us put our truſt under the ſhadow of his wings.*

5 *LET us offer up our united fervent prayers and ſupplications to Almighty GOD, for a more plentiful effuſion of his grace and ſpirit, upon all ranks and degrees of perſons among us, that being a reformed, we may ſtill be a happy and flouriſhing people.*

Let us pray for the *revival* of decayed piety, that ſerious religion, and practical godlineſs, may

thrive and flouriſh, as the *ſureſt foundation* of our peace and proſperity; that there may be a ſpirit of repentance and reformation throughout the nation; that GOD may *delight over us to do us good, and not to pluck us up, and pull us down*; that he may ſtill be our *rock* and our *ſtrength*, our *fortreſs* and *deliverer*; our *ſhield* and *buckler*; the *horn of our ſalvation, and our high tower*; and defeat the hopes and enterprizes of our enemies.

LET us pray for our moſt gracious ſovereign *King GEORGE*, whom GOD has in great mercy advanced to the *imperial crown* of theſe realms; *that on his head the crown may flouriſh, and that his throne may be eſtabliſhed by righteouſneſs*; that his reign may be long and proſperous; and that religion and piety may flouriſh, under the happy influences of his auſpicious government.

LET us beg of GOD to bleſs him with a wiſe and faithful *council*, to guide and direct the management of publick affairs, in this *critical conjuncture*; to proſper his Majeſty's arms; and to bring the juſt and neceſſary war, in which we are engaged, to a ſpeedy and happy concluſion.

LET us pray, that the Divine Bleſſing may deſcend on their *Royal Highneſſes* FREDERICK *Prince of* Wales, *the* PRINCESS *of* Wales, and their *Royal Off-ſpring*; on the DUKE, the PRINCESSES, and on *all the Branches of the* ROYAL FAMILY: And that the important bleſſings we enjoy both *civil* and *ſacred*, may, by their *inſtrumentality*, be tranſmitted to the *lateſt poſterity*.

LET

LET us beg of GOD to preſide in the *great council of the nation*, aſſembled in *parliament*, to preſerve *unanimity* among them; and to lead them into *ſuch meaſures*, as may be moſt *effectual* for preſerving the *balance* of power, the *proteſtant* intereſt, and the *liberties* of *Europe*; and for carrying on the war with vigour, till it iſſues in a laſting and honourable peace; and in the happy revival of our trade and commerce.

AND, laſtly, *Let us not be unmindful of the great duty of charity to the poor; which is part of the proper buſineſs of this ſolemn day:* This GOD expects, and *indiſpenſibly* requires of us; and to this he has given us the greateſt encouragement. *Is it ſuch a faſt that I have choſen? a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? wilt thou call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out, to thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily: and thy righteouſneſs ſhall go before thee, the glory of the Lord ſhall be thy rereward. Then ſhalt thou call, and the Lord ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt cry, and he ſhall ſay, here I am——And if thou draw out thy ſoul to the hungry, and ſatisfy the afflicted ſoul; then ſhall thy light riſe in obſcurity, and thy darkneſs be as the noon-day. And the*

[y] Iſa. lviii. 5,——11. *Lord*

Lord ſhall guide thee continually, and ſatisfy thy ſoul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou ſhalt be like a watered garden, and like a ſpring of water, whoſe waters fail not.

If we would hope for acceptance with God, on our ſolemn days of faſting and prayer, *our prayers and our alms* muſt go together. [z] *And if we break off our ſins by righteouſneſs, and our iniquities, by ſhewing mercy to the poor*, we have ground to hope [a] *it may be a lengthning of our tranquility*: And that God (who is emphatically ſtyled, *a GOD hearing prayer*; and *who never ſaid to any of the ſeed of Jacob, ſeek ye my face in vain*) will vouchſafe a merciful ear to the prayers and ſupplications that have been this day offered up to his ſacred Majeſty, in his *worſhiping aſſemblies*; *That he will ſtill be on our ſide, and nigh unto us in all things that we call upon him for*;—and in his due time, *encompaſs us with ſongs of deliverance*, and turn our ſolemn *faſts* [b] *into joy and gladneſs, and chearful feaſts.*

But if we content ourſelves with *external humiliation*, and our days of *faſting* and *prayer*, are not accompanied with *fruits meet for repentance*; but we return to our former ſins, and continue as bad as ever; we ſhall aſſuredly hereby provoke God to depart from us: and ſooner or later we ſhall become a prey to our enemies.

I shall cloſe this diſcourſe in the words of *Azariah* to *Aſa*, and all *Judah* and *Benjamin* in 2 *Chron.* xv. 2. *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him, and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you.*

[z] Acts x. 4. [a] Dan. iv. 27. [b] Zech. viii. 19.

FINIS.